

SHOCK WAVES tore through the Amateur Cup on Saturday. But, at Loakes Park, favourites Wycombe Wanderers continued along the trail to Wembley by outlasting and eventually outplaying unknown Midlanders Oldbury United in their third round encounter.

Victory assured Brian Lee's men of a second successive appearance in the quarter finals.

It took quite some time to distinguish between Isthmians and outsiders however. Oldbury, never before past the qualifying stages, forced Wycombe to walk a tightrope of uncertainty until the last quarter.

Then the Blues opened up and all thoughts of a giant-kill faded as Bernie Bremer, Larry Pritchard, and Tony Horseman in turn added to Keith Searle's first half score.

All injury doubts cleared before kick-off, leaving Wycombe free to field the same eleven which conquered Enfield, and Oldbury to welcome back two star men — Micky Sabin and Eddie Duffield.

After an orgy of fiery football at Woking the previous Tuesday, Wanderers cooled down considerably, losing much of the co-ordination which might have reduced Oldbury's enthusiasm and spirit to ashes far earlier.

Instead they had to compensate in 45 minutes littered by carelessness.

Clearly the Midlanders were

Wanderers walk a tightrope, then strike

Wycombe W. 4, Oldbury Utd. 0

lifted by the roar rising from, what again rated as by far the highest attendance of the day.

Used to home gates of 70, they showed no complex or nerves in front of the tight-packed 7,000 at Loakes Park, closely harassing the home backs from kick-off.

A marked breakdown in Wycombe's powerhouse, where Ted Powell suffered from a groin strain and consequently struggled to keep contact, let the underdogs snap their defiance.

Breakaway counter-attacks, employing mid-field as a springboard, did more to dent the Blues' ego than their defence, however.

The visiting strikers, including Sabin, four goal hero of the visit to Newquay in round two, gained little ground advantage for all their lively endeavour.

The difference lay in

Wanderers' sophistication, borne from regular appearances in top flight amateur football.

Oldbury are a young side moulded from undoubted talent. But they play in a relatively weak competition and need a season at least of higher standard opposition before their deep-lying potential can be drawn out.

The Midlanders travelled South determined to make their mark, and Wycombe soon learnt the truth of Alan Hawkes' words: "I've never played defensive football in my life," the Oldbury manager claimed beforehand.

In minutes, Alan Jones and Sabin confirmed he had no intention of ordering a switch to negative tactics at this crucial stage.

Oldbury 'keeper Keith Evans twice jumped well to cut out corners, and when his colleagues broke clear from the latter set-piece, Wanderers hit trouble at the other end as a loose scramble developed after 10 minutes.

The Blues looked slightly vulnerable and occasionally flustered following the opening exchanges, which had shown that the Midlanders, however, much of an unknown quantity, were not to be underrated.

But when Wycombe moved sweetly, there was no reasonable comparison — witness a 17th minute move built up via Bremer and almost finished off with a Pritchard shot held on the line by Evans.

Four minutes later, Oldbury got their hosts just as flummoxed as Jones' free kick found Doug Pash unmarked for a drive aimed through a gap in the Wycombe cover. Paul Fuschillo saved the situation at the far post, turning the ball for a corner.

Pundits considered Oldbury's only true chance of a place in the last eight to lie in scoring the first goal. But, with each side dangling on a slender thread, it was Wycombe who opened their account in the 29th minute.

Searle, a threatening figure, made ground up the centre, then sent possession out to the onrushing Horseman on the right. A typically accurate centre was met again by Searle, now inside the 'box', to head the Blues one up.

The Oldbury thread snapped and Wanderers took their cue to push for a quick second goal.

Three minutes from the interval, Searle and Horseman combined menacingly to force another corner from Moore, who so very nearly put through his own net in the process.

United refused to fold and indeed by the interval had turned play back upfield, where Duffield and the frizzy haired George Jackson came within an ace of conjuring a shock equaliser for them.

Jackson won the ball along the Wanderers' line and teed up a drive for Duffield, only to see it deflect smartly off Ian Rundle and onto the bar, across which it ran for the kind of split second by which entire destinies have been changed.

The Isthmians' more cultured style was the telling factor throughout the second period however.

Sabin, heralded as Oldbury's main hope, continued to be stifled out of the game. And gradually Wanderers' all round efficiency and greater fitness restored something like that 'Woking' flair.

United's glory run seemed doomed in the 60th minute when Reece brought down Powell for a penalty. Wycombe skipper John Delaney, the scourge of Enfield, but making

a far less spectacular impact on Saturday's proceedings, duly blasted his kick onto the crossbar — although at first it seemed Evans had conceded a corner.

Whatever, referee Hutchinson gave a goal kick, and for the second time in two Cup ties, a vital penalty had gone astray. Last time Enfield's Duggan wasted his chance.

Instead, Wycombe waited until the 71st minute to clinch matters, when a glorious goal, reminiscent of his recent effort against Tooting in the League, gave Bernie Bremer a deserved place on the scoring list.

Bremer, later to receive great praise from both Hawkes and Oldbury coach, Wyn Bowen, darted in off the left and crashed home Wanderers' second goal on the half-volley.

With their tails up at last, the Isthmians filtered through widening gaps left by Oldbury.

A Horseman 'goal' was disallowed for handball in the 74th minute, but within three minutes, the lead increased again as Pritchard sent a rising shot past Evans after some fine solo work.

Hutchinson pounced on Horseman's cross for a left-footer taken well by Evans, but number four loomed near. After 80 minutes, Wycombe completed a three goals in nine minutes burst as Horseman collected his reward for an afternoon of industry.

Searle slipped the ball to Bremer, who carried it up the left, outpositioning Evans before putting it inside for Horseman's powerful header to make it 4-0.

Each of the second half goals highlighted the individual skills, Oldbury could not hope to match.

From there on, Wycombe were so on top that the final minutes consisted of one long string of corners. But on 90 minutes play, the scoreline read just a little unkindly for their spirited visitors.

"We're very proud of the lads," enthused Welshman Bowen in the dressing room afterwards. "They stuck to their task very well."

Indeed they did. But some tasks take more than just determination.

WYCOMBE WANDERERS: J. Maskell; P. Fuschillo, K. Blunt, E. Powell, J. Delaney, I. Rundle, B. Bremer, J. Hutchinson, K. Easle, L. Pritchard, A. Horseman. Sub.: V. Faulkner (not used).
OLDBURY UNITED: K. Evans; T. Reece, A. Moore, J. Buckall; P. Rock, D. Pash, M. Sabin (sub. R. Heywood, 82nd min.), A. Jones, E. Duffield, G. Jackson, A. Ward.
Referee: D. S. Hutchinson (Chippling Campden).
Half time: 1-0. Goalscorers: Wycombe—Searle (29), Bremer (71), Pritchard (77), Horseman (80).
Official attendance: 7,054.